Charles Wright at the MLA

Constantine Contogenis

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by Constantine Contogenis

A scholar of porn discovered travel writing had been used to write about sex. Another speaker showed us sexy slides: one of a clothed woman exposing her breasts provoked a squeak from a watching woman—a good imitation of Betty Boop.

Right off the lobby, Victoria’s Secret advertised how well their bras advertised. I felt the urge to buy but with feminist theory behind me, I read between the signs: a male, I must stand aside, wait until the buyers are suited and contend for my arm.

But the true yearly passion is for jobs. The career and would-be career haters of clichés say, “meat market MLA” with daring. My one interview over, I became my own interviewer deciding whether to let me back into my life.

I watched for the prosody of clothes in counterpoint with bodies. I looked into the lobby’s available eyes. The return looks stung slightly like fresh bullet wounds that would hurt more as adrenaline drained and I retreated from the line of fire.

At Wright’s reading, I felt that at least for a few days I was saved. I don’t know how he helped by just writing desire against desire—and not even desire for flesh but for things—matching his backyard against the being of no thing. Well, show me the way.